HUMANITY

AND

BENEFICENCE

RECOMMENDED.

Gal 10 Ok

SERMONS

ON

HUMANITY

AND

BENEFICENCE.

Publiſhed with

A View to the PRESENT STATE of the POOR.

Homo ſum ; et nihil humanum à me
Alienum puto.

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13

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

ADVERTISEMENT.

THESE Sermons were firſt preached, and are now made public, from motives of humanity. As compoſitions, the writer does by no means preſume to think them worth the publiſhing; yet he hopes, ſuch as they are, they may be

productive of ſome advantage to the poor: he begs, therefore, they may be conſidered as effuſions of the heart, rather than as productions of the head . . . He is ſomewhat apprehenſive, they may be thought too local, to be addreſſed to the public: his apology is, that though they were delivered to a particular ſociety of Chriſtians, yet he truſts they are of ſo catholic a tendency as to be readily appli-

applicable, on the whole, to chriſtian ſocieties in general. His chief deſign was to recommend the 'needy of his brethren' to the regards of thoſe, who were of ability to ſuccour them. This deſign he had principally in view thro' each of the ſermons. The objections, in the third, againſt a *general* collection for the poor, were none of them imaginary: he did not make one of them himſelf, for the ſake

of

of anſwering it; nor was he ſo deſirous of ſaying much on his ſubjects, as of ſaying what he hoped might conduce to the point he aimed at. That his intention was good, he can honeſtly avouch; but in the execution, he is ſenſible, that he ſtands in need of great indulgence.—It is becauſe of his penury, that he caſts into the treaſury for the poor ſo ſmall a gift; had his abilities permitted, he would have

have thrown in a larger ſum. May the poor be benefited by his offering, humble as it is! He will then rejoice, and give God thanks.

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SERMON I.

BIGOTRY AND SELFISHNESS DISCOUNTENANCED:

HUMANITY AND BENEFICENCE RECOMMENDED.

SERMON I.

Bigotry and Selfiſhneſs diſcountenanced: Humanity and Beneficence recommended.

LUKE X. 37.

—*Go, and do thou likewiſe.*

THESE words are the application of a diſcourſe which our Saviour held with a captious expounder of the Jewiſh law, who *tempted him*, or, as a trial of ſkill, propoſed the queſtion, "What ſhall I do to inherit eternal life?" Our Lord,

who always encouraged the modeſt enquirer, very well knew, at the ſame time, how to ſilence an enſnaring queriſt. Perceiving, as it ſhould ſeem, the indirect deſign of the man in propoſing the queſtion, Jeſus ſaid unto him, "What is the injunction of the law, in the caſe referred to?" And the lawyer anſwered, "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c. and thy neighbour as thyſelf." The anſwer is juſt, replies our Saviour, when the duty enjoined is practiſed in its whole extent: Love God, and love thy neighbour in the full latitude

latitude of the precept: "This do, and thou ſhalt live." But the lawyer, willing to juſtify himſelf, or to make a farther trial of our Lord's abilities, ſaid, "And who is my neighbour?"

Jeſus then, inſtead of giving a formal definition of the term, introduces the apt and moving ſtory of a man, who, in travelling from Jeruſalem to a neighbouring town, was robbed, ſtript of his raiment, wounded, and left on the road almoſt expiring. Now, a certain prieſt happened to be on his journey that way; and although he ſaw the man

lying in this diſtreſs, yet he lent him no aſſiſtance, but inhumanly avoided him, paſſing by on the other ſide: and a Levite likewiſe, when he was at the place, came and *looked* on him indeed, but with an heart as unfeeling as that of the prieſt: *He* too, *paſſed by*. Thus the man muſt have lain and periſhed, had it not been for a good-natured Samaritan; who, as he journeyed, came to the place where this pitiable object lay; and when he ſaw him, he had compaſſion on him. That he was a man, and in diſtreſs, was enough to excite his pity; and although the man

was a Jew, with whom the Samaritans, on account of their religious differences, had no dealings, yet, indulging the humane emotions of an honeſt heart; a heart that was not contracted by prejudice, or corrupted by bigotry, or ſwollen with pride; he went to him, and treated him with great tenderneſs, — bound up his wounds, — "ſet him on his own beaſt," — conducted him to an inn, — ſtayed with him there, till he ſaw he was likely to recover; — when he took leave of him, diſcharged his expences, — commended him to the future care of the hoſt; and

promiſed he would defray whatever expence might attend the perfecting of his recovery.

Such was the caſe given, whether it were founded on a real fact, or parabolically adapted to the occaſion. The appeal our Lord makes, is this, —"Which now, of theſe three, thinkeſt thou was neighbour unto him in diſtreſs?" I defy any one, who hath the bowels of a man in him, to make the leaſt heſitation in his anſwer: The lawyer himſelf, as much diſpoſed as he was to have eluded the conviction, could not do it.

He

He ſaid, — and, doubtleſs, he ſaid inſtantly,—he was "neighbour" to the man, who "ſhewed mercy on him." Appoſite the caſe, and beautiful the application of it! "Then ſaid Jeſus unto him, Go, and do thou likewiſe."

The deſign of this narrative is, no leſs to recommend a humane, benevolent diſpoſition; than to diſcountenance bigotry and ſelfiſhneſs; which, wherever they are indulged, deſtroy whatever is amiable in our nature, corrupt the heart of man, and ſhut up the ſoul againſt the im-

leading

preſſions of humanity. In this leading view, I would conſider the ſubject.

One deſign of the narrative given by our Saviour, I ſay, was to diſcountenance in the Jews that ſelfiſh and bigoted ſpirit, which, it is well known, prevailed among that people; and led them to confine their regards to perſons of their own fraternity.

But the Jews are not the only people in the world, who have confined their notions of neighbourhood to a limited number of their own fraternity or ſect. This

This hath been the manner of thinking, which has too much prevailed, among perſons of all nations, ſince the eſtabliſhment of religion into ſyſtems.

To adopt the ſame articles of religious opinion, and to worſhip in the ſame kind of religious houſes, are the leading circumſtances which have firſt thrown mankind into excluſive ſects; and the bands, which have afterwards connected them cloſely together. As many as are claſſed under the ſame religious profeſſion, do, indeed, conſider themſelves as bound to

regard

regard the members of their own ſect; and to treat each other with particular civilities;— independent on the nearneſs of their abode. Thus a Jew, originally, was conſidered as neighbour to every other Jew, on account of worſhipping in the ſame temple, and embracing the ſame ſet of religious tenets. But as ſoon as a multiplicity of ſects aroſe among them, this firſt general cauſe of union was dropt; and Jews were no longer neighbours to Jews; but, Phariſees to Phariſees; and ſectaries, of every kind, to the members of their reſpective ſects. So foreign

reign, too, from each other, we find were the different ſects, that they ſcarcely agreed in any thing but in cheriſhing reciprocal enmities. This they did agree in; inſomuch that the ties of affinity, or even of blood,—the ties of nature itſelf, —— were not ſufficient to hold them together; or to entitle them to the mutual offices of common civility. Religious perſuaſion controlled the dictates of humanity. That which was deſigned to ſtrengthen and enlarge the benevolent affections, weakened and contracted them. And although they did "conſent to the law," which en-

enjoined "the love of their "*neighbour*," yet the ſenſe in which they took the "*term*," was ſo limited, that it left room for the animoſities of party, and the mutual hatred of ſects.

The caſe,—it gives me pain to obſerve it,—has been nearly the ſame in the Chriſtian world. Chriſtianity was intended, and is, in its own nature, no doubt, well calculated to render men humane, communicative, and benevolent. At the firſt, indeed, it produced its intended effects;—ſo far, at the leaſt, as to attach profeſſors of the ſame com-

common religion ſtrongly to each other. This it certainly did effect for a time; inſomuch that Chriſtians, we know, had an inter-community of goods; formed one joint-ſtock for the relief of their indigent brethren, and lived in the happieſt union of affection.

This happy union, however, this ſtate of fraternity and catholic neighbourhood, did not long ſubſiſt. Sects quickly ſprang up among Chriſtians; and as like cauſes produce like effects, it happened to them, as it had done to the Jews before. In pro-

proportion as ſects grew, the affection of general benevolence decreaſed. While the reſpective members of particular churches were tied together by bonds, which nothing would diſſolve; and entitled, by the circumſtance of having the ſame perſuaſion, to all the charities "of neighbourhood;" others of different churches, or oppoſite perſuaſions, were reprobated as if they had been "heathen men, or publicans." And ſo far were theſe out-caſts from being treated with the tenderneſs of brethren, that, we find, they were often perſecuted with rancour,

and

and might have been left to periſh in diſtreſs, unnoticed, unrelieved by fellow-chriſtians, but of a different church, as the unhappy man who fell among the thieves, was left by fellow-Jews, but of a different order, or tribe.

The ſame contracted manner of thinking, and acting too, hath deſcended even to our own times. To the ill influence of bigotry in religious perſuaſion, we have added the ſhyneſs of political diſtinctions; ſo that though we keep up the cloſeneſs of intimacy with perſons of

our own religious ſect, or political denomination, and are ready to render them the ſervices which neighbourhood calls for, in the ampleſt latitude; we yet withhold from each other as members of a ſect, or a party, thoſe regards, which are indiſpenſably due from men to men, and from every member of the body of Chriſt towards every other. Nay, we often find not only ſuch prepoſſeſſions among Chriſtians of oppoſite ſects as render them indifferent to each other's intereſts, but a certain bitterneſs of ſpirit, which "rejoiceth in iniquity;" which rooteth

rooteth out of the heart the very ſeeds of natural affection; and, —contrary to the temper of love, the ſpirit of Chriſt, and the good genius of our religion,—"worketh ill againſt its neighbour."

As it is uſual to reſtrain the idea of neighbourhood within the limits of our own religious ſect, or political party; ſo it is, likewiſe, to circumſcribe it by the boundaries of proximity of reſidence. But, what an illiberal manner of thinking is it, to imagine, that our regards for our fellow-men ſhould be made to depend on the accidental cir-

cumſtance of ſituation? What have the trifling diſtinctions of parochial diſtricts, or even the more extended ones of kingdoms, to do with limiting our benevolence? What is there in ſoil, or climate, I would know, that ſhould exclude men from our affection, wherever men exiſt; or ſuſpend our good offices to them in diſtreſs, whenever Providence brings them within our reach? "Hath not God made of one blood, all nations of men that dwell on the face of the earth?" "Have we not all one father?" And, are not all men, equally, members of one

one community, which can no otherwiſe be held together, than by the bonds of humanity, and mutual kindneſs? They are. Why then ſhould we ſee any of our brethren periſh, when we have it in our power to ſuccour them: Or how can we be inſenſible to "another's woe," and paſs by an object whom misfortune has reduced to wretchedneſs, with the unfeeling bowels of the prieſt, or the unmeaning looks of the Levite? What, becauſe he is not of our profeſſion, —our party,—our ſect,—or of our limited circle of acquaintance, —ſhall we, for any of theſe rea-

ſons, or for all of them together, harden our hearts againſt a brother, or deny relief to a human creature in diſtreſs? Forbid it, heaven! forbid it, humanity!

To diſregard the diſtreſſes even of a brute-animal betrays an unfeelingneſs of heart. To diſregard, or turn away from a fellow-man, whom, by a well-timed act of humanity, we might ſave from death, or deliver out of diſtreſs, argues a ſavageneſs of diſpoſition. But,

The man is not my neighbour; he is not of our ſynagogue,

gogue, ſays a Jew; what have I to do with him? He is not my neighbour; he does not worſhip at a moſque, ſays a Turk; what have I to do with him? He is not my neighbour, he is not in our diſtrict, ſays one, who ſhould expreſs himſelf in different language; what therefore is the man to *me?* This, ſurely, is the language not of a man to a man, much leſs of a Chriſtian to his brother, but of a Barbarian to a brute. * * *

Having endeavoured to diſcountenance bigotry and ſelfiſhneſs, which lead men to con-

fine their regards to perſons of their own fraternity, or ſect; I would, now, conſider the other part of our Saviour's deſign in his narrative, which was to encourage humanity and beneficence, by ſhewing us, "who is our neighbour," and "what is our duty to him in diſtreſs."

Now, the caſe of the Samaritan very clearly teacheth us, that every man is our neighbour who ſtands in need of our relief, and whom we have it in our power to relieve. It is of little conſequence what his religous perſuaſion be; or what the nearneſs,

neſs, or remoteneſs, of his reſidence. If he be a Pagan, or Mahommedan; one of a different, and even a hoſtile nation; yet, if Providence reduce him to diſtreſs, and place him within the reach of our relief, he becomes our neighbour; and it is our duty to relieve him. This, I am ſure, is the doctrine of our holy religion*: This is the

* The object of charity is our neighbour, that is, (it being underſtood, as † the precept now concerneth us, according to our Lord's expoſition,

† Matt. xxii. 39. — *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.*

genuine

genuine dictate of every human heart, that is not contracted by

or, according to his intent, and the tenor of his doctrine) every man with whom we have to do, or who is capable of our love, eſpecially every Chriſtian.

The law, as it was given to God's ancient people, did openly regard only thoſe among them, who were linked together in a holy neighbourhood or ſociety, from which all other men being excluded, were deemed ſtrangers and foreigners (*aliens*, as St. Paul ſpeaketh, *from the common-wealth of Iſrael, and ſtrangers from the covenants of promiſe*). For thus the law runneth in Leviticus, *Thou ſhalt not bear any grudge againſt the children of thy people, but thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf*; where ſelf-

Eph. ii. 12.

Levit. xix. 18.

ſelfiſhneſs, or corrupted by bigotry; and it is certain, thus

Jews and *neighbours* are plainly terms equivalent; other men being ſuppoſed to ſtand at diſtance without the fold or politic encloſure which God, by ſeveral ordinances, had fenced, to keep that nation unmixed and ſeparate: nor can it be excepted againſt this notion, that in the ſame chapter (Levit. xix. 34.) it is enjoined, *But the ſtranger that dwelleth with you ſhall be unto you as one born among you, and thou ſhalt love him as thyſelf*; for by that *ſtranger* (as the Jewiſh maſters will interpret it) is meant *a proſelyte of righteouſneſs*; or one, who, altho' a ſtranger by birth, was yet a brother in religion, having voluntarily ſubmitted to their law, being engaged in the ſame co-

Lev. xx. 24, 26. Exod. xxxiii. 16. Deut. vii. 6. xiv. 2.

the

the good Samaritan both thought and acted. His behaviour was

venant, and thence admitted to the ſame privileges, as an adopted child of that holy family.

But now ſuch diſtinctions of men being avoided, and that *wall of partition* demoliſhed, all the world is become one people, ſubject to the laws of one common Lord. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Chriſt Jeſus.*— Now the blood of Chriſt hath cemented mankind; the favour of God embracing all, hath approximated and combined all together; ſo that now every man is our brother, not only by nature, as derived from the ſame ſtock, but

Eph. ii. 14.

Gal. iii. 28.

Col. i. 20.

Eph. i. 10.

ii. 13.

ſuch

ſuch as every good mind muſt neceſſarily approve; and, for the

by grace, as partaking of the common redemption. Now God, *deſiring the ſalvation of* ALL *men*, and inviting ALL men to mercy, our duty muſt be co-extended with God's grace, and our charity muſt follow that of our Saviour. 1 Tim. ii. 4. Tit. ii. 11. Col. i. 23.

We are, therefore, now to *all* men, that which one Jew was to another; yea more than ſuch: our Chriſtianity having induced much higher obligations, ſtricter alliances, and ſtronger endearments, than were thoſe, whereby Judaiſm did engage its followers to mutual amity. The duties of common humanity (to which our nature, frame, and ſenſe, do incline us, which philoſophy recommendeth, and natural religion doth preſcribe, being

truth

truth of this obſervation, I appeal to every one who hears me.

grounded upon our community of nature and cognation of blood, upon apparent equity, upon general convenience and utility), our religion doth not only enforce and confirm, but enhance and improve; ſuper-adding higher inſtances and faſter ties of ſpiritual relation, reaching in a ſort to *all* men (as being in duty, in deſign, in remote capacity, our ſpiritual brethren), but in eſpecial manner to all Chriſtians, who actually are fellow-members of the ſame holy fraternity, contracted by ſpiritual regeneration from one heavenly ſeed, ſupported by a common faith and hope, ſtrengthened by communion in acts of devotion and charity.

1 Pet. i. 23. ii. 17.

Hereon, therefore, are grounded thoſe

Withhold

Withhold your approbation, if you can, from this, or from any evangelical commands, explicatory of this law, as it now ſtandeth in force; that *as we have opportunity we ſhould do good unto* ALL *men, eſpecially unto them who are of the houſhold of faith*; that *we ſhould abound in love one towards another, and towards* ALL *men*; that we ſhould glorify God in our profeſſed ſubjection unto the goſpel of Chriſt, by liberally diſtributing to the ſaints, and to *all* men; that we ſhould *follow peace with* ALL *men*, ſhould be patient towards *all* men, and gentle towards *all* men, and ſhew all meekneſs towards *all* men, and ever follow that which is good both

Gal. vi. 10.

1 Theſ. iii. 12.

2 Cor. ix. 12, 13.

1 Theſ. v. 14.

Tit. iii. 2.

2 Tim. ii. 24.

1 Theſ. v. 15.

other

other well-directed act of kindneſs towards an object in diſtreſs.

among ourſelves and to *all* men; that we
1 Tim. ii. 1. ſhould make ſupplications, interceſſions, and thankſgivings, for *all* men, eſpecially
Eph. vi. 18. for ALL *ſaints*, or all our fellow Chriſtians, and expreſs
Phil. iv. 5. *moderation* or ingenuity to ALL men.

Such is the object of our charity, and thus did our Lord expound it, when by a Jewiſh lawyer being put to reſolve this
Luke x. 19. queſtion, *And who is my neighbour?* he did propound a caſe or hiſtory, whereby he did extort from that Rabbi this confeſſion, that even a Samaritan diſcharging a notable office of humanity and mercy to a Jew, did thereby moſt truly approve himſelf

My

My brethren, in ſuch a caſe you cannot withhold your approbation: The very inſtant any ſuch act of beneficence is preſented to the mind, we do *neceſſarily* approve it. It is not enough, however, give me leave to ob-

a good neighbour to him; and conſequently, that reciprocal performances of ſuch offices were due from a Jew to a Samaritan; whence it might appear, that this *relation* of NEIGHBOURHOOD is *univerſal* and *unlimited*. *Barrow's Works*, Fol. Vol. I. p. 241.

Such of my readers as are not poſſeſſed of *Barrow*, will not be diſpleaſed with the length, either of this, or the following extract. See note, p. 44.

ſerve, that we approve what is worthy of praiſe, in the characters of other men; — it is our duty to "do likewiſe."

The duty of treating our neighbour with tenderneſs, or of "ſhewing mercy" towards all men in diſtreſsful circumſtances, carries its own reaſonableneſs with it. It is a branch of that univerſal law of equity, which no man ever heard without ſubſcribing his aſſent to it;— that law of our Saviour, I mean,— which provideth, that "all things whatſoever we would that men ſhould do unto us, the very

ſame things, on a ſuppoſed change of circumſtances, we ſhould do unto them." To attempt to prove, that this law itſelf is founded on equity, would be as needleſs, as to prove, that ſhowing mercy to others in diſtreſs, is a branch of it. Theſe are points, which, to every mind rightly conſtituted, prove themſelves, and no more require the formalities of reaſoning, than the moſt evident axioms do.

Add to the reaſonableneſs of the duty,— the peculiar pleaſure which attends the diſcharge of it.

We cannot avoid paying a compliment to our own hearts, as often as we feel them beating with compaſſion. We cannot but applaud ourſelves for indulging every tender impulſe, that prompts us to alleviate the diſtreſſes of our fellow-creatures. We cannot but take a complacency in ourſelves for cheriſhing every affection which carries us beyond *ourſelves*, and has the happineſs of *another* for its object. The very propenſity to relieve the diſtreſſed,— the very emotion itſelf, though it is inſtinctive, — gives us pleaſure: And when, — being able to execute

ecute the kind intentions of the heart,—we do actually communicate relief to the miſerable; we feel as high, as undiſſembled a pleaſure in relieving them, as they do in being relieved. Nay, in the language of our good Saviour, "It is more bleſſed," it affords greater pleaſure "to give than to receive."

The diſpoſition to pity our fellow-creatures in diſtreſs, and to relieve them, makes an amiable part of our nature. It ought therefore to be cultivated, that it may be exerciſed on every fit occaſion, and towards

every perſon who is the worthy object of it.—

A variety of circumſtances, it is true, *do* concur to determine the exerciſe of our compaſſion; and we certainly *may* have reaſons for preferring one object before another, in the exerciſe of it. Nay, I am ready to plead, that although our charity towards objects in diſtreſs ſhould not be limited within the precincts of a party, or a ſect, or by the boundaries of vicinity; yet it ought to be regulated in its exerciſe; — becauſe otherwiſe, there will be danger

danger of its being miſapplied: and ſince this is the caſe, it may not be amiſs to point out, briefly, ſome of thoſe circumſtances which ought to recommend a perſon to our charity.

The firſt recommendation of a man to our charity, is his diſtreſs, and the neceſſity of ſuccour to his ſubſiſtence. But beſide this, there are ſeveral other ſecondary recommendations; ſuch as, natural kindred, —relation, or alliance contracted, —particular intimacies,— prior obligations from friendſhip, — nearneſs of ſituation, and the

like. Theſe circumſtances are, in fact, conſidered as particular recommendations of a man to our beneficence; and, in truth, although we ought to "have compaſſion on *all*," yet we ought, likewiſe, to make "*this* difference;" that is, we ought to relieve *one* perſon rather than *another* (when we can not relieve *both*), from a regard to ſituation, kindred, and other circumſtances of a ſimilar nature.—— This, it will be allowed, is very compatible with the largeſt exerciſe of our beneficence; and that it is, likewiſe, entirely reaſonable in itſelf,

ſelf, will appear, from ſuppoſing a caſe thus circumſtanced.

Let us, then, ſuppoſe two perſons in diſtreſs;—one, an entire ſtranger to us, and at a remote diſtance;— the other, a native of the ſame place, and of the ſame particular neighbourhood, &c. with ourſelves. Let us be informed of their diſtreſs, and let it be equal in degree. Which of theſe perſons, I aſk, would in reaſon claim our preference? whether he, whoſe claim is founded on humanity alone, or the other, whoſe claim of humanity

manity is ſupported by the ſecondary recommendations of a particular neighbourhood, &c.? It would, I am certain, pain every man of a benevolent heart, not to be able to relieve both. But, if the moſt benevolent could only relieve one, he would not heſitate, I imagine, in giving the preference to the latter: reaſon, as well as a certain ſenſe of the mind exerciſed on moral objects, would plainly lead him to give ſuch a preference. Where, however, the perſon applied to, has it in his power to relieve both of theſe ſuppoſed objects, they certainly

tainly then ought both to be relieved: nor ſhould the want of any ſecondary recommendation be a reaſon for not relieving the moſt diſtant ſuppliant on the face of the earth; —becauſe, though he be recommended by no particular circumſtance, he is by the general one of indigence, which is ſufficient to recommend him to our regards as men, and to give him a right to our charity as Chriſtians.

Give me leave now to obſerve, that great ſtreſs is laid on mercy

mercy * and beneficence by the Author of our religion, who was

* It is indeed moſt conſiderable, that at the final reckoning, when all mens actions ſhall be ſtrictly ſcanned, and juſtly ſentenced according to their true deſert, a ſpecial regard will be had to the diſcharge or neglect of theſe duties. It is the bountiful and merciful perſons, who have relieved *Chriſt* in his poor members and brethren, who in that day will appear to be the ſheep at the right-hand, and ſhall hear the good ſhepherd's voice uttering thoſe joyful words, *Come, ye bleſſed of my father, enter into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirſty, and ye gave me drink; I was a ſtranger, and*

Matt. xxv. 34, &c.

himſelf

himſelf an amiable pattern of theſe god-like virtues. His diſ-

ye took me in; *I was naked, and ye clothed me*; *I was ſick, and ye viſited me*; *I was in priſon, and ye came unto me.* He doth not ſay, becauſe you have made goodly profeſſions, becauſe you have been orthodox in your opinions, becauſe you have frequented religious exerciſes (have prayed often and long, have kept many faſts, and heard many ſermons) becauſe you have been ſtaunch in your converſations, becauſe you have been punctual in your dealings, becauſe you maintained a ſpecious guiſe of piety, ſobriety, and juſtice (although, indeed, he that will come off well at that great trial, muſt be reſponſible, and able to yield a good account in reſpect of thoſe particulars); but becauſe you have

ciples

ciples we are, as long as we comply with his precepts, and copy

been charitably benign and helpful to perſons in need and diſtreſs, therefore bleſſed are you, therefore enter into the kingdom of glorious bliſs prepared for ſuch perſons. This proceeding more than intimates that, in the judgment of our Lord, no ſort of virtue or good practice is to be preferred before that of charitable bounty; or rather that, in his eſteem, none is equal thereto; ſo that if the queſtion were put to him, which is one of them to Antiochus (in *Athanaſius's Works*, Tom. II.) which is the moſt eminent virtue? our Lord would reſolve it no otherwiſe than is done by that father, affirming, that mercifulneſs is the queen of virtues; for that, at the final

the example which he hath left us;—particularly in this reſpect, —"that we ſhould follow his ſteps:" Longer than this—be what elſe we may—his diſciples we really are not. Our calling Chriſt, Lord, or our being members of the pureſt church on earth, —while we diſregard our brethren in diſtreſs,— will avail us nothing: and all thoſe pretences which we may make to the love of God, "whom we

account, the examination chiefly proceeds upon that; it is made the ſpecial touch-ſtone of piety, and the peculiar ground of happineſs. *Barrow's Works*, Vol. I. page 311.

have

have not ſeen," which are compatible with the neglect of our fellow-men, " whom we do ſee," are not only inſignificant, but worſe than nothing. They are a ſolemn mockery; and, in the ſight of that Being whom we cannot impoſe upon, an abomination.

While then, we agree, and cannot but agree, to cenſure the inhuman behaviour of the Jewiſh prieſt, and Levite, towards a man in a diſtreſsful condition; let us be careful to avoid every the moſt diſtant approach towards it in our own conduct. And ſince,

ſince, on the other hand, we cannot but applaud the oppoſite behaviour of the friendly, good-natured Samaritan; let us— in the expreſſive and elegant application of our Saviour— let us, my brethren, "*go, and do likewiſe.*"

The ſame caſe, indeed, in all its circumſtances, perhaps, may never occur. Objects of compaſſion, however, in one ſhape of wretchedneſs or other, always preſent themſelves in abundance; and if we want not the heart, I am ſure we need never want opportunities to ſhew, that

we have profited by ſo good an example.

The field for the exerciſe of our humanity is wide: Let us habituate ourſelves to the exerciſe of it; and by no means limit our beneficence to perſons of one denomination. If a man be really neceſſitous, let it be no objection againſt our relieving him, that he does not rank under our ſtandard. If he be even our enemy, and hath done us injuries, let not this hinder our good offices to him, much leſs provoke us to "render evil for evil," or to "ſhut up our bowels

bowels of compaſſion from him." On the contrary, though he be our enemy, ſtill let us remember he is a man, and that we profeſs ourſelves Chriſtians; and therefore, "if he hunger, feed him; and if he thirſt, give him drink." In ſo doing, we ſhall probably make him our friend: at all events, we are ſure of having the approbation of our own hearts. This will be our reward, at preſent; and we have a much greater reward to expect, in reverſion.

Let us then "ſhew mercy with chearfulneſs." "Let charity be without diſſimulation." Let us, "as the elect of God, put on bowels of mercies, kindneſs, tenderneſs of heart;" and diveſting ourſelves at once of bigotry and ſelfiſhneſs, let us conſider every perſon in diſtreſs as entitled to our regards.

Now, may God open our hearts, and ſo far enlarge them by the influences of religion, as that we may comprehend the whole race of men in our benevolent wiſhes; and relieve,

and

and benefit, as many as we are able, by our perſonal good offices. Thoſe whom we have it not in our power to ſuccour, we cordially recommend to thy notice, O thou compaſſionate parent of mankind! Help them, we beſeech thee, O God of ſalvation! Amen.

SERMON II.

THE GENERAL OBJECTS OF COMPASSION; THE SPECIAL OBJECTS OF IT, IN A PARTICULAR CHRISTIAN SOCIETY.

SERMON II.

The general objects of Compaſſion*; the ſpecial Objects of it, in a particular Chriſtian Society.

The general Epiſtle of JUDE, Verſe 22.

Of ſome have compaſſion, making a Difference.

ST. Jude, in this Epiſtle, gives us an account of a ſet of teachers, who, even in his days,

* This ſermon was delivered at a time when the weather was extremely ſevere; had

had corrupted Chriſtianity: he warns the Chriſtians to whom he writes, againſt theſe men, who had intruded into their ſocieties, and mixed in their feaſts of charity;—men of licentious principles and abandoned morals,—who "had turned the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs, and denied the only Lord God, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." He exhorts them, likewiſe, to remember the doctrines in which they had been principled by

when corn, and all kinds of proviſion were at an exorbitant price; and when many families were reduced to a very compaſſionable ſituation.

the

the Apoſtles; to pray with fervency; to ſtrengthen each other's love of God, and their mutual attachment to virtue; that they might hope, on ſure grounds, to receive the reward of eternal life. To this he adds, in the words of the text, "of ſome have compaſſion, making a difference:" that is, tenderly regard ſuch as through credulity or weakneſs have been ſeduced by artful and deſigning men; and endeavour to reclaim them with lenity. Diſtinguiſh between theſe and others, who have ſuffered themſelves to be ſeduced, becauſe they "had

pleaſure

pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs:" With ſuch you are to make uſe of ſharper methods; you muſt ſtrongly repreſent to them their danger; and convince them, that you are intereſted as deeply in reclaiming them from falſe teachers, as you would be, in ſnatching their perſons out of the flames to ſave them from periſhing.

You have thus ſeen the words in their relative connection. They will naturally enough lead me, firſt, to hint at the real exiſtence of compaſſion; and ſecondly, to point out the objects of it.

By

By compaſſion I mean an inſtinct or affection of our nature, which inciteth us not only to feel for our fellow-creatures in diſtreſs, but to relieve them.

Every one muſt be ſenſible, that ſuch an affection does really exiſt in our nature: for who is there that is not affected even by the bare recital of diſtreſsful occurrences? Who is there, in a ſtate of war for inſtance, that hears of its ravages, without feeling for thoſe who are ſuffering by them? Who can be told of families reduced to indi-

indigence by the horrors of a tempeſt, an earthquake, a conflagration, or by any of thoſe diſtreſsful accidents to which all men are liable, —and yet be unmoved by ſuch calamities? Who is there that is witneſs to the "complainings of our poor in the ſtreets," under a ſtagnation of trade, or the dearneſs of proviſions, — without feeling for the poor, and wiſhing to relieve them? Nay, ſuch is the force of this ſympathetic inſtinct, that it acts upon us, by a ſort of mechanical neceſſity, even in imaginary caſes of a ſimilar nature. What elſe, I would

would know, induces our dramatic writers to draw ſo many of their characters in ſcenes of diſtreſs: or when ſcenes of this nature are well repreſented, what elſe is the reaſon that our theatres are ſo generally crouded? There is, then, belonging to our nature an original affection, which incites us to feel for the miſerable, and to ſuccour them. It were needleſs, indeed, to take any pains in order to evince this, ſince every man, who has an heart, muſt often neceſſarily feel it throb with compaſſion. Kind is the proviſion which our bountiful

tiful Parent hath made for his offspring! He hath thus, even with the ſenſitive part of our frame, blended an affection, which ſtimulates us very powerfully both to ſympathize with the diſtreſſed, and to relieve their diſtreſſes.

Having briefly touched upon the real exiſtence of Compaſſion, let me now point out the general objects of it.

All men in diſtreſs are the objects of this affection. The very circumſtances of their having the ſame common nature with

with ourſelves, and of our being liable to the ſame unhappy occurrences which they have met with, are enough to entitle them to our effective compaſſion; that is, not only to our pity, but, if it be in our power, to our actual aid. The reaſon of this is obvious. The whole race of men form one community. They are neceſſarily ſeparated, indeed, from each other by diſtance of place; and, excluſive of this natural neceſſity, they are ſeparated again by political boundaries. They come thus to be thrown into various nations, kindred and people; or, from

one large community, they branch out into ſeveral leſs ſocieties: theſe again divide themſelves into ſmaller; till we come to fraternities, neighbourhoods, and ſeparate families. But ſtill purſue the diviſion as far as you pleaſe, the ſame common relation to one general community ſubſiſts.

Kingdoms bear the ſame relation to this general community, which leſs ſocieties do to a kingdom. Separate families bear the ſame relation to neighbourhoods and fraternities, which individuals bear to a ſeparate family.

And

And the individuals of a family, in the laſt place, bear the ſame relation to the chief of it, and to each other, which the members of the body reciprocally bear one to another, and each to the head: ſo that what the apoſtle applies to the *diſciples of Chriſt*, may be extended, by a parity of reaſon, to the *whole human race*:—'If any one mem-
'ber of the whole community
'of men ſuffer, the reſt ought
'to ſuffer or ſympathize with it,
'and contribute to its relief.'

Hence it is plain, that, in the largeſt ſenſe, every fellow-crea-

ture in ſuffering circumſtances is an object of our compaſſion; inſomuch, that if we are informed of his diſtreſs, and have it in our power to relieve him, it is our duty to do it. Be our duty, however, what it may, in reaſon, we know too well, in fact, that few perſons are willing to extend their compaſſion, and the influence of it, beyond a certain ſphere. This ſphere, indeed, is uſually a very narrow one. Men, too generally, think themſelves little bound to extend their beneficence farther than to their own contracted neighbourhoods. Some confine it within

ſuch

ſuch ſcanty limits, as to think themſelves obliged to regard only thoſe in their own parochial diviſion;—others--thoſe of their own general kindred;—and others, again,--their own particular families. This is, certainly, a very ungenerous way of conſidering things. But there is little ground to hope, that men in general will ever be brought to conſider things quite ſo liberally as one could wiſh; and by attempting to act upon them too much at once, we run the hazard of defeating our intentions, and of not acting upon them at all. For this reaſon, I ſhall not at

this time preſs the duty---implied in the ſubject before us---in its whole extent. I could wiſh, indeed, that our hearts were opened as wide, as are the diſtreſſes of our fellow-creatures, on any part of the face of the earth. I could wiſh that our compaſſion extended itſelf to the relief of thoſe unhappy perſons *abroad* ‡, who have ſuffered, and who are ſtill ſuffering, by

‡ This ſermon, and the preceding, were preached in the year 1766: the perſons referr'd to *abroad* were the inhabitants of Bridge-town, in Barbadoes, &c. whoſe very affecting caſe had excited general

by the deſolating fury of a conflagration. Theſe unhappy men are certainly the objects of our compaſſion, be they ever ſo remote from us; nay, the remoter they are from the ſources of relief, the more is it our duty, for this very reaſon, to ſend them ſuccour: and the only effect which their diſtance ought to have, ſhould be to quicken us in diſpatching our benevolent contributions. This hint, however, muſt be left to your private re-

neral compaſſion, and prompted many to contribute liberally towards relieving them in their diſtreſſes.

flection. What is farther intended at this time, is to point our to perſons in affluent, or in eaſy, circumſtances, thoſe poor belonging to this ſociety, who are the proper and ſpecial objects of their compaſſion. * * *

I am to point out to you, ſirs, that are in affluent or in eaſy circumſtances, the poor of this ſociety who are the *proper* objects of your compaſſion,—

All the poor, in one view, are objects of this kind. Even ſuch as have been reduced to poverty by their own imprudence, nay,

nay, by their own extravagance; even theſe, I ſay, are, in one view, proper objects of your pity and beneficence. Yes, if ſuch perſons have ſeen into their folly; if they are ſenſible of their paſt miſconduct; if they are actually reformed, and yet in diſtreſs; ſuch perſons, there can be no doubt, are entitled to your compaſſionate regards: and the heart of every benevolent man will tell him his duty in this reſpect, both with more explicitneſs, and greater force, than it is poſſible another ſhould tell him.

If perſons, indeed, have been reduced to poverty by extravagance and the neglect of their affairs; and though they continue poor, are yet at the ſame time ſlothful, and extravagant too, as often as they have the means of being ſo; if they think to tax other perſons with their maintenance, while they themſelves are able to work, and yet are lazy and unwilling; if they chuſe to take their idle circuits, in order to ſubſiſt by begging, or even by rapine and violence, rather than to employ themſelves induſtriouſly in their own callings:—in theſe caſes, ſuch perſons

ſons do ſtill, indeed, merit our notice. But the moſt friendly notice, I ſhould think, which we can take of ſuch perſons, is, in the language of the apoſtle, to bid them "ſtudy to do their "own buſineſs;"---to exhort them to work with their own hands towards the ſupply of their neceſſities;---to charge them to refrain from the haunts of idleneſs and intemperance;---to be equally diligent and frugal;---and to improve every inch of their time, that "they may have "lack of nothing."—When they ſhall have done theſe things, they will deſerve to be taken tender notice

notice of, and relieved. And, when they ſhall deſerve to be thus noticed, and relieved; I would hope, that in this ſociety there is no danger of their being wholly neglected.

So long, however, as ſuch people continue in their diſorderly and idle courſes of life, a meaſure of wholeſome ſeverity is due to them. It is our duty to make a difference between them and others of a different character: nay, to warn ſuch men of the conſequence of their behaviour, and to exhort them to reform it, where it is ſo exceedingly blameable, is one of the trueſt

proofs

proofs of our compaſſion, which we can give them. But as it is to be hoped there are not many ſuch poor in this ſociety, I will turn to the poor of a different character,—to thoſe who are ſober and modeſt, and induſtrious, and yet diſtreſſed. That there are ſuch in *this* ſociety, or in any other of equal extent, it is very reaſonable to ſuppoſe.

It is not at all incredible, at any time, indeed, or in any place, that a man ſhould be poor, let him be as ſober and induſtrious as he may. Beſides the uſual caſualties of life, — to which every

every perſon is liable,—if a man hath a numerous family to provide for, by the labour of his own hands; it will be full as much as he can do to provide for it comfortably, even when the neceſſaries of life are at much more reaſonable rates than they are at preſent, or have been for ſome time paſt. Now, on the labour of his hands, chiefly, it is well known ſuch a family muſt depend for its ſupport; for while his children are young, the partner of his cares will find it ſufficient employment to manage her domeſtic concerns. If, therefore, ſhe be ever ſo willing

to ſecond his earnings by her endeavours, ſhe cannot ſecond them much,—her attentions being otherwiſe engaged. And we all know, that children, be they ever ſo tractable in their diſpoſitions, and ever ſo well managed, are yet a conſiderable time before they can be at all helpful, either to their parents or to themſelves. Such a man at the head of ſuch a family, I ſay, has enough to do to make a comfortable proviſion for it, even when the ſupports of life are at reaſonable rates, and when—in the fulneſs of health—he is capable of labour. What

muſt

muſt the caſe be in the preſent advanced price of almoſt every article of life, and in a time of ſickneſs and affliction? Think ye of this, my friends, and excuſe me from the vain attempt to deſcribe their wretchedneſs. Their wretchedneſs, indeed, is much greater in itſelf than any deſcription of mine could repreſent it; nor can any-thing give you an adequate idea of their diſtreſs, but going yourſelves to viſit their "houſes of mourning." Theſe perſons are, indeed, the *ſpecial* objects of your compaſſion.—

Go

Go, my friends, to their abodes of ſickneſs, anxiety, and want. Go I beſeech you; but go not thither with an empty hand, or an indifference of heart. Go and ſympathize with the afflicted parent in his diſtreſs. Go and weep with the mother, who is weeping for her 'children, and refuſeth to be comforted,' becauſe they are 'deſtitute of daily food,' and ſhe is not able to ſuccour them. Look on her children who are crying to her for bread, while ſhe is forced, by hard neceſſity, to deny their requeſts. Even the 'crumbs from your table' would be wel-

come there.——Do go and ſcatter your bread there, with a feeling heart, and a liberal hand. You will thus comfort an afflicted father, whoſe affliction has been greatly encreaſed by anguiſh for his family. You will thus make glad the diſtreſſed heart of a mother. You will thus ſave a family, perhaps, from periſhing: you will however relieve it in diſtreſs, and add conſiderably to its comfort.

'The bleſſing of theſe poor, who are ready to periſh, will come upon you.' This of itſelf,--trifling as it might ſeem, at any other

other time,—at ſuch a time as this, will be a very pleaſing circumſtance to you. The comfort which you have adminiſtred to them, will be reflected back into your own boſoms. The pain which you felt, at the firſt, from ſeeing ſuch objects of wretchedneſs, will be ſucceeded, and greatly over-balanced too, by the pleaſure of having contributed to their relief. Your own hearts will praiſe you for having done a good-natured action. You will think of it, not without delight, as often as ever you chuſe to reflect upon it: And I ſhould think, (ſuppoſing the

other parts of your conduct have correſponded with your beneficence) you would cloſe the day on which your hearts have 'deviſed and done liberal things for the poor'—with the moſt enviable of all human ſatisfactions.

Not ſo much as an attempt has been made to work upon your paſſions, by ſetting myſelf to deſcribe a ſcene of diſtreſs, either in ſtudied, or borrowed language. I honeſtly declare to you, I have deſcribed nothing but what has fallen under my own obſervation; and that deeper ſcenes of affliction than theſe have

have occurred to me, which I now paſs over, as fitter to be told in private, than publickly detailed.

You need not be informed, that the perſons who ſhare in what money is collected from the ſmall number of communicants in this place, on our ſacrament-days, are not the only objects of your compaſſion, belonging to this ſociety. There are ſeveral others. And it is a circumſtance worth your attending to—that the moſt deſerving objects are uſually the moſt modeſt; for which reaſon

it would be well, if thoſe who are poſſeſſed of the ability to do good, would go about ſeeking for occaſions of doing it.

A little, my friends, from your well ſupplied, if not ſuperfluous ſtores; a little of what you can very well ſpare,—without at all injuring your own families,—by a prudent beſtowment of it on the diſtreſſed poor, would both render them a very eſſential ſervice, and lay them under great obligations to you; and—what is infinitely more—would recommend you to the approbation of that good Being, who

who with ſuch ſacrifices is ever well-pleaſed.

Having pointed out to you the proper and ſpecial objects of your compaſſion; let me now ſubjoin the following obſervations.

Firſt,--The Author of our being has endued us with compaſſion, that we ſhould be ready to ſympathize with our brethren in diſtreſs; and, if we are able, to relieve them by our bounty. Sympathy, however, in itſelf, is grateful to thoſe who are in ſuffering circumſtances.--Indepen-

dent of the relief which it prompts us to adminiſter, it does agreeably ſoothe their minds, and alleviate their ſufferings, though it cannot wholly remove them. There are none of us, who cannot ſubſcribe to the truth of this obſervation, from our own experience of ſome kind of diſtreſs. —Every one is ſenſible, on the other hand, how diſguſting an unfeelingneſs of heart and behaviour is to perſons, under any ſpecies of affliction, from what cauſe ſoever it may ſpring. To the poor, this is peculiarly cutting; nor need we wonder, indeed, that it ſhould.—While human

human nature remains as it is, it cannot well be otherwiſe.

In the next place, let me obſerve—the ſudden impulſe of compaſſion may ſometimes lead us to miſapply our beneficence. It may lay us open to deception; and ſubject us, perhaps, to the imputation of credulity, or weakneſs. But what then? Theſe are reaſons, it muſt be owned, and ſufficient reaſons too, why we ſhould be prudent in the exerciſe of our compaſſion; but theſe—you will allow—are not reaſons why we ſhould attempt to diveſt ourſelves of ſo amiable

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an affection. By no means: While we cultivate a generous benevolence towards all men; we ought ever to exerciſe compaſſion towards the diſtreſſed, and poor. Even among them, we ſhould make a reaſonable difference; and when their diſtreſſes are equal in degree, ſuit the application of our beneficence to the reſpective worth of their characters. Again;

Let it be obſerved—there is no virtue, ſtrictly ſpeaking, in following the mere impulſe of a natural inſtinct; and ſuch compaſſion, undoubtedly, is. The virtue

virtue of all acts of kindneſs conſiſteth in their being regulated by reaſon, and directed towards the fitteſt objects, under the influence of reflection. Sometimes, it is true, we are, in a manner, impelled to adminiſter relief, before reaſon can be conſulted: yet, whatever happineſs of temperament ſuch a promptneſs to relieve the diſtreſſed may indicate, it implies nothing directly virtuous. Indeed, an indiſcriminate compaſſion, which makes no difference between proper and improper objects, is both a weakneſs in itſelf, and, in fact,

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productive of ill conſequences. ..... The good uſe which every one of us ſhould make of theſe remarks is—that we ſtudy, in the beſt manner we are able, to give our compaſſion its happieſt efficacy, by directing it to the moſt worthy objects: Who ſuch objects are, it has been my endeavour to ſhew you.—When compaſſion is thus properly directed towards our fellow-creatures, under any kind of diſtreſs, and, particularly, towards our brethren who are ſuffering the hardſhips of poverty, it makes a very amiable part of our nature.

Add

Add to this; when our beneficence ſprings from real compaſſion, and is well-regulated; it is one of the virtues, which is attended with great pleaſure in the exerciſe of it; and to which —in conjunction with the other virtues of a chriſtian life— Chriſtianity inſures an everlaſting reward.

I can ſcarcely wiſh you, my brethren, any truer pleaſures than thoſe which ariſe to a good heart, from relieving the diſtreſſes, and adding to the comfort, of one's fellow-creatures. Theſe, with

with all the ſatisfactions of a ſolid piety, and the ever-growing pleaſures of real, progreſſive virtue, I do moſt heartily wiſh you. Amen!

SERMON III.

A STATED GENERAL COLLECTION FOR THE POOR, RECOMMENDED.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST SUCH A COLLECTION ANSWERED.

SERMON III.

A ſtated general Collection for the Poor, recommended. Objections againſt ſuch a Collection anſwered.

1 CORINTHIANS xvi. 2.

Upon the firſt day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in ſtore, as God hath proſpered him.

THERE is no part of his office, which a miniſter of common humanity will diſcharge with more chearfulneſs, than that of endeavouring to diffuſe among his hearers a ſpirit

of benevolence. This is the good ſpirit of our religion: to endeavour to promote this, is our duty; and if we are not wanting in the ſpirit which we ought to recommend, we ſhall eſteem our duty a pleaſure. Be this as it may; our Saviour himſelf has ſet us the example,—and his apoſtles have copied it,—of exhorting Chriſtians to acts of beneficence, eſpecially towards the poor.

St. Paul, you ſee, propoſes a fund to be raiſed, or a collection to be made, for the poor at Jeruſalem among the Chriſtians at Corinth,

Corinth, on the 'firſt day of every week.' The firſt day of the week, you need not be informed, was the chriſtian ſabbath then, as it ſtill continues to be. To this let me add—that on every ſabbath, in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, the Lord's-Supper was both adminiſtred, and Chriſtians, in general, joined in the participation of it. It was from this circumſtance, indeed, of their uniting in common to partake of the Lord's-Supper, that it was called the Communion. The remark, which I am going to ſubjoin, is a very obvious one, namely, 'that nothing could be

more ſuitable to theſe occaſions of their aſſembling together, than ſuch a contribution to the poor, as the apoſtle exhorteth them to make'. . . The joint remembrance of that Saviour and friend of men, who 'was rich, and yet for their ſakes became poor, that they through his poverty might become rich'—who, in the time of his public life, was always employed 'in going about to do good,' and, at his death, gave the ſtrongeſt proof, that could be given, of his univerſal philanthropy;—the joint remembrance, I ſay, of ſuch a friend, was peculiarly fitted to keep

keep glowing in their hearts ſo fervent a love of him, as would expreſs itſelf by their charity, and kindneſs one towards another.

The love of our neighbour, it muſt be owned, has made a part of religion, under every form in which it has appeared; even under the groſſeſt corruptions by which, in other reſpects, it has been at any time diſgraced. Yes; whatever hath been the practice of mankind, they have ever profeſſed, at leaſt, to make the love of their fellow-men one part of their religion. But the

love of our neighbour,—joined to the love of God,—does make the very eſſence of Chriſtianity—the moſt humane, and every way the moſt friendly ſyſtem of religion, that has appeared in the world.

In diſcourſing farther on this ſubject; my deſign is to recommend, in as plain a manner as I can, a *ſtated*, and *general* collection for the poor.

The effect which one could wiſh ſuch a diſcourſe to produce, you ſee, is of a permanent nature: without ſo much as aiming

ing at your paſſions therefore, let me endeavour to convince your judgment. To this end, I beg leave to lay before you ſome reaſons which occur, for altering our preſent cuſtom of collecting for the poor, and introducing a more general one.

Our uſual collections for the poor, you know, have hitherto been made on the former part of our ſacrament-days; and among thoſe only, who have ſat down profeſſedly at the Lord's table.

Now, the number of our communicants, you are ſenſible, is

at no time large. It never bears that proportion to the bulk of this *ſtill* reſpectable ſociety, which one could wiſh. Even ſuch as are in communion, do not think proper always to attend. They have their reaſons for this—it is taken for granted—and reaſons too, of the validity of which they themſelves ſhall be the judges. Be their reaſons, however, what they may; the conſequence is, that the poor of this place,—who either do receive charity, or are the objects of it, —are, at this time, more in number, than thoſe who are uſually preſent at the ſacrament,

of

of ability to give. Such of our friends as receive the Lord's-Supper--as often as they think proper to attend—do, it is but juſtice to acknowledge, contribute their quotas with liberality. Yet, ſtill the collection that is made [by reaſon of the uſual ſmallneſs of the numbers] cannot, you are ſenſible, amount to any conſiderable ſum.——How many there are, who actually ſhare in this collection, I do not exactly know; but the number of perſons—including children—who are objects of our charity at this time, I can certify you, does conſiderably exceed the uſual number

ber of communicants. In ſuch a ſtate of things, at ſuch a time too, as this; when even they, who make a decent appearance at more favourable junctures, find it difficult to provide for their families; in ſuch a ſtate, I ſay, and after deducting for the cuſtomary expences of the Lord's table; what can be done, out of ſo diſproportioned a collection, for our numerous and diſtreſſed poor?

From this caſe of facts, fairly ſtated, ſhould it not ſeem, that our preſent method of collecting for the poor, is a very inade-

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quate one; and, therefore, that ſome other method ought to be introduced? The appeal is made to you with openneſs, brethren; and ſince cuſtom has denied me the privilege of taking your anſwer in form, my wiſhes muſt flatter me to conclude, you are 'all of one mind' for the expediency of making our collections in ſome different manner. If ſo; this leads me to ſhew you the reaſonableneſs of ſtill continuing to make our collections *ſtatedly*, as we do, every * ſacrament day; but to make

* Monthly.

them

them *general*, at the ſame time, *through the whole ſociety*.

Now, in order to ſhew you the reaſonableneſs of continuing to make our collections at the already *ſtated* intervals, one ſingle ſentence is abundantly ſufficient—which is—that the wants of the poor recur full as frequently, as do our collections. Other reaſons might be alleged, but they are waved as needleſs: inſtead, therefore, of ſetting our times of collecting at a farther diſtance, it were adviſable, perhaps, to bring them nearer. This, however, is not contended for.

Let

Let the times for collecting, if you pleaſe, continue as they are: only excuſe me for reminding you, that the ſame ſum which appears conſiderable, when it is viewed in the groſs, and by the month; may really be but a trifle, when it is divided into parts, and conſidered as a contribution by the week: and the poor, let it be obſerved, muſt live by the day, be the pittance allowed them ever ſo ſmall.

To proceed: As our contributions to the poor are already *ſtated*; ſo it is equally reaſonable, 'they ſhould be *general*;' and for

for this purpoſe, that they ſhould be made on the * latter part of our ſacrament days; becauſe, on the latter part of the day, our congregation is the moſt numerous.——The reaſonableneſs of this will appear to every one, at leaſt in a relative view; and the two caſes, which bear a relation to each other, need only be placed together, in order to give

* The ſame reaſon that is alleged, here, for making the collection for the poor on the latter part of the ſacrament day, will hold for making it after the morning ſervice [and before the adminiſtration of the ſacrament] in thoſe places, where the audience is largeſt in the mornings.

you

you full conviction in a few words.

Let me obſerve then; you do collect for what are called the 'repairs of the place,' at the time propoſed of collecting for the relief of the poor. What is the reaſon of this? The reaſon is a very ſubſtantial one. For, every perſon, who voluntarily joins himſelf to any particular church, does thereby lay himſelf under ſpecial obligations,—'according as God hath proſpered him,'—to ſupport its intereſts. This—by tacit conſent, at leaſt--is the plain agreement of every man, when he becomes

becomes a member of any particular church. He is not, it is true, by ſo particular a connexion as this, precluded from doing, at the ſame time, as much as he pleaſeth, for any other ſociety: By no means. All that is meant is, that his voluntarily attaching himſelf to one chriſtian ſociety, in preference to others, does derive an obligation upon him—at his own diſcretion indeed, but in ſome good proportion to his abilities—to ſerve that ſociety, or promote its well-being.

Theſe are the very principles, on which you do make your col-

collection for 'the repairs of this place,' [at ſuch ſtated intervals, as you have judged it proper to fix upon] on the latter part of the Lord's day; in order by this means to make it general. And indeed, that 'what is a general intereſt, ſhould be made a general concern,' is ſo reaſonable in itſelf; that one knows not by what medium to make it appear more evident, than it does by the very terms in which it is propoſed. The application of what has been ſaid on this point, to the other now depending, is ſo direct, that to enlarge upon it were needleſs.——All that

ſeems neceſſary to be added, is, that the reaſons aſſigned for making a collection for the 'repairs of the place,' when the aſſembly is the fulleſt, hold with greater force for making the collection 'for the poor,' at ſuch times: becauſe the relief of our honeſt, and diſtreſſed poor, is certainly a matter of greater conſequence to us all, than juſt the raiſing of a fund, for the temporary exigencies of the building. This latter object furniſhes, however, a very ſufficient reaſon for making the collection as general as it can be made; and if ſo;—is there not every reaſon for making

making the contribution to the poor, equally general? This queſtion ſeems to admit but of one anſwer: and, either partiality in favour of the poor miſleads my own judgment, or, the anſwer muſt needs be in the affirmative.

The argument which has been alleged, you will admit, does extend its concluſion to all the members of this ſociety, who actually partake of the Lord's-Supper. But why ſhould you,—it is eaſily known to whom I am ſpeaking,——why ſhould you, who never come to the *Lord's-*

Supper, be charged with the expences attending *that*;----expences, which are defrayed out of the collections for the poor?

To this I reply; the expence attending the *Lord's table*, is too trifling an object to merit the attention of any perſon, who is of ability to contribute towards the relief of the poor. The deſign of our meeting together *there*, is not to indulge our appetites as at an intemperate meal, or a ſumptuous board; but, as the diſciples of Chriſt—rich, and poor, 'without reſpect of perſons'—to eat of the 'ſame bread,'

and

and drink of the 'ſame cup;' in order to commemorate the death of our common Redeemer; and, at once, to affect our hearts with a ſenſe of our joint relation to Him, as 'members of his body,' and of our mutual obligations, as 'members every one of another.' Add to this; the Lord's table—be it furniſhed at what expence it may—is not fenced round with any excluſive bars. —All, who find themſelves ſeriouſly diſpoſed to join in this entertainment, are invited to partake of it. To ſuch one may fitly enough addreſs thoſe words of the ſervant in the Goſpel, who

was ſent to them that were bidden to the ſupper—'come, for all things are ready.'—

But ſome of you, it ſeems, have ſcruples on the point; and think it proper to abſent yourſelves from the ſacrament.

I am ſorry, my fellow Chriſtians, that any of you ſhould have ſcruples about ſo plain a duty, as the injunction of our common Lord, evidently, makes the commemorating of his death to be; and wiſh you happily rid of them. But, whatever ſcruples you may have about receiving the

ſacra-

ſacrament; you certainly can have none about contributing to the relief of the poor. True: in the latter caſe, you have *no ſcruples*: yet you will aſk; *why* ſhould you, who are not communicants, be called upon for your contributions?

You are called upon in this caſe, not only as you are Chriſtians, but as you are men. In both theſe reſpects, the poor are your brethren. They are the offſpring of the ſame heavenly parent. They are equally related with you to the ſame holy family, the firſt-born of which is

Chriſt, and the head of which is God. Beſides; we do all of us acknowledge 'one Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm:' and though you may not, indeed, think proper to join in the Lord's-Supper, which is one of the poſitive appointments of our religion, yet you are certainly ſubject to the moral obligations of it, equally, as others. Though you chuſe not to *offer ſacrifice* with others, yet you are equally bound with others, to '*ſhew mercy*—to *diſtribute to the neceſſity of the ſaints*'—*to relieve the worthy and diſtreſſed poor*. In one word; you are men, who have voluntarily joined your-

ſelves

ſelves to this Chriſtian ſociety; and, in conſequence of this, as hath been proved, you have obliged yourſelves to ſhew a ſpecial regard to its well-being; —in which, a regard to the poor is, undoubtedly, included. It is reaſonable, therefore, that the collection for the poor ſhould be made *quite general*, through the whole ſociety.

* Notwithſtanding this, I will not take upon me to ſay, that every one of you is blameable, who does not contribute to the

* Butler,

poor of this ſociety; but I will ſay, that thoſe of you who do, are highly commendable. I will ſay more; that you promote an excellent work, which your particular relation to this ſociety is a providential call upon you to promote. And there can be no ſtronger reaſon than this for doing any thing, except the one reaſon, that it would be criminal to omit it.

It were eaſy to ſay much more; but on ſo plain a caſe, where the humanity of the hearer muſt be ſuppoſed to facilitate the deſign of the ſpeaker, perhaps, more

than was neceſſary has been already ſaid. There are ſome, however, in all ſocieties, who require to have things made extremely plain, before they are able to underſtand them; others, before they are willing. For this reaſon, it will be proper to take notice of other objections againſt a general collection for the poor, which may be raiſed by ſome, who do communicate, as well as by others, who do not. * * *.

OBJECTION I.

It will be objected, perhaps, that our cuſtom of collecting for the

the poor may very well continue as it is; and that your miniſters might ſupply any ſuppoſed defects which may attend it, by pointing out to you the objects of your charity in private.

Very well, my friends! With readineſs we embrace the privilege you allow us. We are glad of every opportunity of pointing out to you the proper objects of your beneficence. But will you pleaſe to conſider, theſe opportunities do very frequently recur; and that, although we would not be backward to remind you of the objects of your charity, on certain occaſions yet,

yet, we would not be thought officiouſly importunate. There is, beyond queſtion, a certain delicacy requiſite, as well in private ſolicitations for charity, as in the private beſtowments of it. [Some perſons, it is poſſible, may not comprehend the meaning of this; thoſe, however, who have a tolerable ſenſibility of temper certainly will;—to ſuch it muſt needs be thoroughly intelligible.] A ſtated general collection, made publicly at the times propoſed, you muſt be ſenſible, would, in a great meaſure, remove the inconvenience which I have hinted at. Beſide; this man-

manner of collecting does not preclude us from reminding you of the proper objects of your charity, on ſpecial occaſions; though it will, it is to be hoped, excuſe us from doing this of courſe, and as it were by mere profeſſions; which,—for reaſons beſt known to ourſelves,—we muſt be frank enough to own, is not a little diſagreeable.

OBJECTION II.

It may be, perhaps, objected, that every perſon is the fitteſt to beſtow his own charity; becauſe, every perſon himſelf, muſt be ſuppoſed beſt to know ſuch poor

as

as he conſiders the proper objects of it; and therefore, that *general* collections are needleſs.

In anſwer to this, you are deſired to obſerve, that this objection—if it hath any weight at all——holds with equal force againſt all collections whatever; even againſt thoſe, which are made according to our preſent very diſproportioned method of collecting. But you will excuſe me for ſaying, that the objection has no weight at all: it has not; becauſe, though it be granted, that every perſon is, indeed, the fitteſt to beſtow his own charity; yet,

yet, it cannot be admitted, that every perſon who is able to give charity, does beſt know all the poor of this place who are the proper objects of it. This, I ſay, cannot be admitted, unleſs his connexions with the poor were more general, than they uſually are, between ſuch unfortunate people, and thoſe who are of ability to give. There are many perſons belonging to this ſociety in diſtreſs, whom you, firs, in affluent, or in eaſy circumſtances know little, or nothing of. Such perſons commonly live, either in thoſe remote, or obſcure parts of the town, which you

you but rarely have occaſion to viſit: and, unleſs they come to you as ſuppliants, I ſee not how you can be ſuppoſed to be acquainted with their circumſtances. But there are ſome,—and thoſe too worthy of your compaſſionate notice,——whoſe modeſty diſcourages them from applying to you as ſupplicants; and who, rather than ſeem troubleſome to you, are contented to ſtruggle with the hardſhips of poverty, or to pine in indigence. This is a real caſe. Now, without a *general* collection, how, I would know, are ſuch perſons, as theſe, to be provided for? A

poor's fund raiſed by our general contributions,—if the management of it were put into proper hands,—would extend even to theſe perſons. Is it not, therefore, extremely reaſonable, that ſuch a fund ſhould be raiſed?

Obſerve well; your *general* contributions need not at all prevent, or interfere with, your *private* benefactions. Theſe you may beſtow as liberally as you pleaſe; and on ſuch perſons too, as you yourſelves think to be the moſt deſerving of them. What I want, here, to make you ſenſible of is, that without ſome ſuch

ſuch fund as is propoſed, thoſe poor who are not known to you, muſt probably be neglected, when in diſtreſs. But,

OBJECTION III.

You will ſay, perhaps, there is no poſſibility of ſupporting all the poor, be our collections as general as they may; that proper places are already opened for their reception; and, if they cannot earn their ſubſiſtence, they may throw themſelves upon a—pariſh.

In reply to this, let me hint to you, that the deſign of our

contributions to the poor, is not entirely to ſupport, but ſomewhat to aid them; not to maintain them in eaſe, and ſloth, but, if they are capable of working, to ſecond their own endeavours to provide for themſelves; or, if by ſickneſs, infirmities or age, they are diſabled, to do then what we can to ſoften their diſtreſſes, and to render their lives ſomewhat comfortable to them.

They may throw themſelves upon a pariſh, it is true: the laws of their country have given them this right. But one would think, that policy alone—to ſay nothing

nothing of any higher motives—one would think, that even policy itſelf ſhould lead us to furniſh timely reliefs to the poor, in ſeaſons of peculiar diſtreſs, rather than ſettle them for a conſtancy on the public.

A well-timed relief to theſe unfortunate perſons, in circumſtances of affliction, might ſupport them under it; and after this, they might be able to provide for their families, themſelves, without adding for a conſtancy to the public charge. And what difference is there—tell me—between contributing a *tempo-*

rary ſupply to perſons in diſtreſs, out of a poor's houſe, and *entirely ſupporting* them in it? Whatever difference there may be, as things are circumſtanced at preſent, there would be none at all, [or, if there were any, it would be plainly in favour both of the public, and of yourſelves] were but the collections, I am recommending, as general through all Chriſtian ſocieties, as the ſpirit of Chriſtianity requires, they ſhould be. The only difference, in that caſe, between *relieving* the poor at their own homes, and *ſupporting* them elſewhere, would be to the poor themſelves;——a dif-

difference, indeed, which muſt be greatly in favour of them, ſo long as they—in common with all other men—do with their own homes connect peculiar home ſatisfactions.

Add to this; what we pay by aſſeſſments, we pay from the obligation of law; but what we give in acts of beneficence, we give voluntarily: and, although in this caſe indeed, we give from a ſenſe of obligation, yet it is from a ſenſe of moral obligation, which —every one muſt feel—differs widely from obligation of a merely legal kind. In one caſe,

—to expreſs myſelf according to a very eſſential difference which ſcripture hath made,——we are barely 'righteous men;' in the other, we ſhall be 'good men;' worthy of being called the 'children of our Father who is in heaven.'

In this reſpect, every good man will endeavour to reſemble the Beſt of beings. He will think himſelf moſt happy if, like his heavenly Father, he can prevent diſtreſs, by giving before he is aſked. He will, however, ſeize the firſt opportunity of giving. What he giveth he will give with a plea-

a pleaſurable ſatisfaction, becauſe, he will give it with a compaſſionate heart. His 'heart will be full of compaſſion;' he will therefore, if he be able, give with a liberal hand. Such a man too, will 'guide his affairs with diſcretion, that he may be the more able to ſhew favour and lend. He will diſperſe; he will give to the poor. His goodneſs ſhall endure for ever; his horn ſhall be exalted with honour.'

OBJECTION IV.

It may be ſaid, that by ſuch collections as are pleaded for, our poor

poor would be prepared to expect relief in times of diſtreſs, and, conſequently, encouraged in idleneſs *.

* Though nothing, to be called an objection in the way of argument, can be alleged againſt thus providing for the poor; yet perſons of too ſevere a temper can, even upon this occaſion, talk in a manner, which, contrary ſurely to their intention, has a very malignant influence upon the ſpirit of charity——talk of the ill-deſerts of the poor, the good uſes they might make of being let to ſuffer more than they do, under diſtreſſes which they bring upon themſelves, or however might, by diligence and frugality, provide againſt; and the idle uſes they may make of knowing before-hand, that they ſhall be relieved in caſe of thoſe diſtreſſes. Indeed,

To

To this let me have leave to reply, that this objection, ſo far as there is ſuch a thing as a prejudice againſt them, ariſing from their very ſtate of poverty, which ought greatly to be guarded againſt; a kind of prejudice, to which, perhaps, moſt of us, upon ſome occaſions, and in ſome degree, may inattentively be liable, but which pride and intereſt may eaſily work up to a ſettled hatred of them; the utter reverſe of that amiable part of the character of Job, that *he was a father to the poor*. But it is undoubtedly fit, that ſuch of them as are good and induſtrious ſhould have the ſatisfaction of knowing before-hand, that they ſhall be relieved under *diſeaſes* and *caſualties:* and thoſe, it is moſt obvious, ought to be relieved preferably to others. But theſe others, who are not of that good charac-

it hath any real weight, chiefly, if not entirely affects the perſons, whom you ſhall empower to diſtribute your contributions. If

ter, might poſſibly have the apprehenſion of thoſe calamities in ſo great a degree, as would be very miſchievous, and of no ſervice, if they thought they muſt be left to periſh under them. And though their idleneſs and extravagance are very inexcuſeable, and ought by all reaſonable methods to be reſtrained: and they are highly to be blamed for not making proviſion againſt age, want, and ſuppoſeable diſaſters, when it is in their power; yet it is not to be deſired, that the anxieties of avarice ſhould be added to the natural inconveniencies of poverty..... See *Butler's Sermon, preached before the Governors of the London-Infirmary.*

the

the perſons whom you ſhall think fit to appoint to this office, do but faithfully diſcharge it,—as it ſhould, before-hand, be preſumed they will,—there can be but little danger of the inconvenience mentioned in the objection: for, they will take every poſſible precaution to guard againſt being impoſed upon: and, while they relieve the modeſt, induſtrious, and deſerving poor; they will give the poor of a different character to know, that till they reform their conduct, they have nothing to expect from your contributions. . . . There are ſome other objections, which men do very commonly urge to excuſe

excuſe themſelves from charitable contributions of any kind; one of which is,

OBJECTION V.

"That Charity begins at home."

The meaning of this, when it has any meaning at all, beyond that ſordid ſelfiſhneſs, which it ought never to have, is, that your own families, and dependants are the firſt and principal objects of your regard. This I allow: nay, for this I ſhall plead. But, you will indulge me, in my turn, to obſerve, that although charity does begin at home, it ſhould not end there.

One part of the obſervation is as trite indeed, but full as juſt as the other. To ſay more of it would be to make it of too much conſequence.

OBJECTION VI.

It is poſſible that ſome of you, who are 'much at your eaſe,' may plead as an excuſe for not contributing towards the relief of the poor,—'the hardneſs of the times.'

The times, indeed, are hard; but who are the greateſt ſufferers? Not you, by whom the plea is ſuppoſed to be made.

You

You are in the number of thoſe, 'whom God hath proſpered:' you have all things round you in plenteouſneſs; high as proviſions are, you can, many of you, ſit down to a table furniſhed with elegance: and, even thoſe, who reach not the ſuperfluous enjoyments of life, have the comfortable accommodations of it.

The poor, on the contrary, are actually ſuffering the hardſhips of the times. They are in want even of the neceſſaries of life; if you doubt it, ſtep into their dwellings, and be convinced. One cannot even think of hunger,

hunger and cold, and nakedneſs, without ſhivering almoſt at the very thought: what muſt the poor—think ye—ſuffer, who are equally deſtitute of food, and raiment, and fuel? Suppoſing them even poſſeſſed of *health*, their ſituation muſt needs be very diſcomfortable, while they are forced 'to lodge without ſufficient cloathing, and have not covering in the cold'—while their *handful* is ſpent, and their *cruſe* is waſted, without the viſible means of procuring a freſh ſupply. But if to this you add *want* of *health*, anxiety of heart, and the many more infelicities of afflicted po-

verty than one can recount; how truly pitiable is the condition of a fellow-creature ſtruggling with ſuch calamities! Alas, we whom Providence hath bleſſed with abundance, little know what the poor are ſuffering, in *theſe times*, under *ſickneſs* and *affliction*.——Ye who 'have all things and abound,' 'deal out your bread to the hungry; deliver the needy that crieth; help the fatherleſs, and ſuch as have none to help them.' The ſatisfactions of heart ariſing from theſe offices of humanity will far exceed the ſurfeiting pleaſures of luxury, which are all that

that can ariſe from the *diſſipation* of wealth; and they infinitely exceed the meagre pleaſures of avarice, which are all that can ariſe from the *hoarding of it up*. Let us guard, therefore, againſt profuſeneſs, 'that we may have to give to him that needeth;' and reflect, that to 'lay by us in ſtore' for the relief of the diſtreſſed, is the beſt way, by which we can hallow the accumulation of wealth: 'He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again.'

Having anſwered, as it ſhould ſeem, the moſt material objections which can be ſuppoſed to affect the caſe I am recommending, nothing remains now, but to conſider the proportion, in which we ſhould each of us contribute our ſhare towards the charitable fund which has been pleaded for; and, the methods by which it may be diſtributed, ſo as to produce the happieſt effects.

Theſe points need not to be long inſiſted on. Every individual among us, does certainly beſt know his own circumſtances;

ſtances; and all the rule which needs to be given, is, 'that we do each of us, in ſome good proportion to our circumſtances, contribute as much as our own conſciences—when they are honeſtly rectified before Almighty God—ſhall tell us, *we can afford.*' This rule is a general one indeed: it is however a comprehenſive rule; and, at preſent, there is no neceſſity for making it more particular. To this let me add that other equally general, but benevolent, rule of the apoſtle—'every man, according as he purpoſeth in his heart, ſo let him give; not grudgingly, or of ne-

ceſſity, for, God loveth a chearful giver.'

As to the method by which the ſums to be collected may be diſtributed, ſo as to give them the happieſt effects, it is not for me to direct. This is ſubmitted to your own judgment. You will, however, permit me to obſerve, that it doth not ſeem eligible to leave this matter to the care of a ſingle man. Would it not be preferable to chooſe two, three, or a greater number of perſons; as being more likely to be thoroughly acquainted with the ſituation and cir-

circumſtances of the poorer part of the congregation? If in this, as in every other reaſonable caſe, your miniſters can give you any aſſiſtance, they will eſteem it their pleaſure to be your ſervants.

SERMON IV.

THE PROVISION WHICH PARENTS Ought to make for THEIR CHILDREN.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE RICH To relieve their NECESSITOUS KINDRED.

SERMON IV.

The Proviſion which Parents ought to make for their Children. The Obligations of the Rich to provide for their Neceſſitous Kindred.

* 1 TIMOTHY v. 8.

If any man provide not for his own, and eſpecially for thoſe of his own houſe, he hath denied the Faith; and is worſe than an infidel.

NATURE has had ſo provident a regard to the continuance of the ſpecies, that ſhe

* The writer hopes that what is here ſaid of the proviſion which parents ought has

has originally fixed in the hearts of parents a ſtrong affection for their offspring; to be convinced of which, we need only aſk what the ſentiments of mankind are of thoſe parents, who ſeem to have diveſted themſelves of this affection? Such men are always looked upon as a kind of monſters. Nature, I ſay, or,—to ex-

to make for their children, and of the obligations of the rich to provide for their neceſſitous kindred, will be conſidered in connexion, with his leading deſign;—which, the reader will pleaſe to recollect, was to recommend the needy to the regards of thoſe who were able to ſuccour them.

preſs

preſs myſelf more properly—the *Author* of nature *hath* made this kind proviſion for the ſupport of our ſpecies. It is in this caſe, however, as it is in every other. God hath planted the affection within us; but the cultivation of it he expecteth from our care. This is a taſk incumbent on us; and if we neglect it, the parental affection——natural as it is—will no more produce its proper fruits than any other affection will, which God hath planted in the heart of man.

It would be a miſ-penſe of time, to ſet myſelf to prove from Chriſtianity,

tianity, that it is the duty of parents to provide for their offſpring. I will do you all the juſtice to ſuppoſe, you are convinced, that it is your duty to provide for your children, in the beſt manner you are able in reſpect both to their animal, and their ſpiritual life: taking this for granted; I would conſider a little what is implied in this proviſion;

Firſt; as it relates to the animal life of your children.

Now, the leaſt that is implied in this proviſion, is, that you exert

exert your endeavours to furniſh them with the ſupports of their Being, during the ſtate of infancy. You are very ſtrictly bound to do this: for, they are caſt upon you; and upon you, under the care of Providence, they are immediately dependent for their very ſubſiſtence. You have been the inſtruments of bringing them into a world, where they ſtand in continual need of many things, but where, of themſelves, they can procure nothing: if you deſert them, therefore, in this condition of inability, and want; nay, if you provide not for them their daily

daily food, and clothe them not with raiment, or miniſter not ſupplies to their neceſſities; what muſt become of them? Alas, your providing hand is as eſſential to their continuance in life, as is the breath which God hath breathed into their noſtrils.

I am addreſſing myſelf, now, to perſons in the lower circumſtances of life: perſons in affluent circumſtances want not ſo much to be addreſſed in this part of my ſubject; as, in this reſpect, they are happily placed above the temptations to negligence. But, it is ſometimes other-

wiſe with perſons, who are in ſtraiter circumſtances. Among them, I am afraid, there are ſome, who—while they laviſh away their earnings in exceſs,—neglect to provide the requiſite ſupports even for their helpleſs infants. Who, my friends,—let me aſk you—*who* will think themſelves obliged to provide for *your* children; while *you* are either ſquandering away what might ſupply their wants, or indolently loitering about, and neglecting to procure ſuch ſupplies? You may know, perhaps, who will diſcharge this office for you; I am ſure, I do not; and muſt beg

leave, as a friend, to admoniſh you, that if you do not make the beſt proviſion for your children you can—yourſelves—it is very probable, they will ſuffer by your negligence; and very poſſible, that they may utterly periſh. If they do, 'ſee ye to it;' for 'their blood will God require at your hands.'

When God is pleaſed, indeed, to remove parents by death; in ſuch caſes, as there ſeems to be a call for his Providence in behalf of the helpleſs Orphans, ſo, we ſee, they are frequently taken care of and provided for: 'When father

father and mother thus forſake them, the Lord he taketh them up.' But while parents are continued to their children; and are able by induſtry to procure them the ſupports of life; every one, in ſuch a caſe, concludes, the parents are the fitteſt perſons to do it: they are ſo: and, if they exert not themſelves, to the utmoſt of their abilities, to do this, they not only deny the Chriſtian Faith, but they are worſe than Infidels: nay, they are worſe than the very brutes, —which always care and provide for their young.

What has been ſaid of furniſhing your offspring with the ſupports of life, during the ſtate of infancy, may be extended likewiſe to your providing for them, through childhood; and as long as ever they are incapable of providing for themſelves. Nay, when they are capable themſelves of doing ſomewhat towards their ſubſiſtence, you are not, even then, to deſert them. There is a time between childhood and youth, as well as between youth and manhood; when your contributions will ſtill be neceſſary, and your neglect to contribute towards their ſupport,

ſupport, will be attended with ruinous conſequences to them.

To this let me add; the proviſion, which you ought to make for your children, is not limited to your furniſhing them with the ſupports of life during infancy, and childhood, and as long as they are unable to provide for themſelves: Theſe are indeed, eſſential to the proviſion which you ought to make; but theſe are far from being the whole of it.—For, you are to provide not only for the being of your children; but, in the next place;

For their well-being; not only for their animal, but their ſpiritual, or rational life.

And for this purpoſe, if you have that regard for your children, which you ought to have; you will expreſs it, firſt, by giving them a virtuous education: and, ſecondly, by doing what you are able, to place them in the world in ſuch ſtations, as may promiſe the faireſt, at once, for yielding them the greateſt happineſs, and ſecuring to you the trueſt ſatisfactions.

For

For accompliſhing theſe ends, you will exert every good endeavour. You will 'riſe up early, and late take reſt.' You will both be frugal in your management, and moderate in what you expend upon yourſelves. Nay, you will abridge yourſelves of many things for the ſake of your children, which otherwiſe, you might innocently enough enjoy: and theſe ſacrifices, believe me, which you make of your own inclinations to their well-being, will be ſo far from ſeeming hard, that, on the contrary, they will appear as pleaſing to you, as they are acceptable unto God.

Yes; if you have that warm affection for your children, and that ſincere regard for their intereſts, which every parent ought to have; you will chearfully ſubmit to every inconvenience, on your own account, rather than ſee them periſh, either for want of the ſupports of nature, or of inſtruction.

What is ſaid to you in reſpect to the giving of your children a virtuous education, and to the fixing of them happily in the world, is ſaid unto all; for this equally concerns parents of every rank.

How

How divine a pleaſure muſt it afford you to reflect, that by your care,—with the bleſſing of Almighty God——your children have been trained up to be good men; that they have, by your provident regards, been fixed ſomewhat happily in this world; and—what is infinitely more—that they have been formed to the bleſſedneſs of heaven and eternity? This muſt needs fill you with an enviable joy: and ſurely there can be no parent, who has the heart of a man in him, but muſt think, theſe fruits will amply recompenſe him for every hardſhip he may

ſtruggle

ſtruggle with, in making the proviſion, which has been recommended. * * *

FROM perſons in the lower circumſtances of life, let me paſs to thoſe, who are in what may be called *moderate* circumſtances.

It is incumbent on you, my friends, to provide for your children, and for thoſe of your own houſe, 'things that are decent in the ſight of all men.' It is incumbent on you to give your children ſuch an education, as is ſuited to your abilities; and

to

to make ſuch proviſion for them, as ſhall be proportioned to the views, which you ought to have in fixing them in the world. Theſe views ſhould be, to render them uſeful members of ſociety; and happy in themſelves, according to thoſe humble ſtations, in which they are likely to be placed.

The happineſs of a man depends not ſo much on his particular ſtation, as on having his mind accommodated to his condition; on chuſing a plan of life ſuitable to his rank; and on acting, with propriety of character,

ter, the part aſſigned him in the drama of the world. With theſe principles a perſon may be happy in almoſt any ſtation: without them he can be happy in none. The buſineſs of education, therefore, ſhould be, to impreſs theſe principles on the minds of your children; and to habituate them to act under their governing influence.—Children as ſuch, we know, are in many reſpects alike. They have the ſame paſſions; the ſame deſires. They purſue the ſame objects. They conſider not what is ſuitable to their rank, but what is agreeable to their inclinations: envy, vanity, the love of

diſ-

diſtinction, and other equally active paſſions ſoon begin to operate on their minds: and unleſs theſe be corrected in time, by prudent diſcipline, they will gain an aſcendency over the minds of *your* children; remove out of their ſight the lowly condition of their birth; and fill their heads with romantic notions of dreſs, of finery, and one knows not what. Let your good ſenſe, then, teach you to regulate the education of your children, not by their idle fancies, but by your own real circumſtances. —I do not mean, that you ſhould ſtint your children to a certain

mea-

meaſure of knowledge, for knowledge, provided it be of the right ſort, is the beſt endowment you can impart to them: what I mean is, that the knowledge you give them ſhould be of the uſeful kind; ſuch as is ſuited to the mediocrity of *your* ſtations, and adapted to make *them* happy in thoſe humble walks of life, in which, it is very probable, they *muſt go*.

To give your children an education much above your abilities, will be doing them an injury. To bring them up with higher views, than your fortunes

tunes can anſwer; or to flatter them with an end, beyond the means, which you provide for their attaining it; would be not only imprudent, but cruel. This would ſubject them to perpetual mortifications: it would entail unhappineſs upon them, through the future periods of life; and in the end, probably expoſe them to ruin. We do, in fact, too frequently meet with inſtances of this kind; of perſons, I mean, whoſe happineſs in life has been ſacrificed to the fooliſh vanity of their parents.

Alas, if parents, ſcarcely in the middle ſtations of life, will vie

vie with thoſe of opulent fortunes; if inſtead of curbing, they wiil rather ſpur on their children to the expenſiveneſs of dreſs, and to what they affectedly call the making a genteel appearance;—if they will do this;—what are they doing? Why; they are thus diſſipating their ſubſtance, by means, which render them ridiculous to every ſober judge; and draining off thoſe very ſources, out of which, they ought to provide their children the decent ſufficiencies of after-life. However, though I thus ſpeak to caution you againſt a practice, which appears to be as common,

common, in many places, as it is wrong; I do yet flatter myſelf to hope better things of you.

Let me obſerve to you, in the next place; that as education is ſet too high, when it is much above your abilities, and beyond the means you provide for fixing your children in the world; ſo it is, on the other hand, ſet too low, when it is diſproportioned to your circumſtances, or beneath the fortune, which you have provided for them. For, what avails the ſcraping together of a fortune for your children, if you do not take care to fit them,

by a ſuitable education, for enjoying it? This ſerves no other purpoſe, than to render you blameable, and them much leſs happy, and uſeful in life, than they would otherwiſe be. You will be careful then, that in avoiding one extreme, you do not fall into the other. The laſt extreme, however, you are ſenſible, is far from being ſo common, in the preſent times, as the former; and for this reaſon I have ſatisfied myſelf with ſaying the leſs againſt it. . . . Let but the caution, which has been given, be accepted according to the friendlineſs of my intention; and no parent,

parent, I am certain, will blame me. Whether I have your blame, however, or your approbation, I am perſuaded, what has been ſaid is reaſonable in itſelf; and I am conſcious that it was intended for your benefit. It is our duty to ſay, not what may ſooth, and flatter; but—if we can—what may profit. This hath been honeſtly intended, in as unexceptionable a method as I could think of. * * *

Let me, next, be indulged in addreſſing myſelf to you, ſirs,

whom Providence hath bleſſed with abundance.

There is no doubt, but that you will take ſufficient care to provide for your offspring. You —without peradventure—-will give your children all the advantages of education the times will admit, and the place, at leaſt, in which you live, will afford. You will not be wanting in any reſpect, it is to be hoped, in expreſſing your regards —your *ſincereſt* regards—for 'your own.' You have already made an handſome proviſion for them: and, by your means, they have

have the proſpect, not only of being fixed in the world advantageouſly, but of paſſing through it with eaſe, and credit, and pleaſure. . . . What I am going to obſerve unto you, might, indeed, have been obſerved to perſons, whoſe circumſtances are much inferior to yours; for, in proportion, it ſeems to be univerſally juſt: but give me leave, in addreſſing myſelf eſpecially to you, to obſerve; 'that you are under obligations to provide, not only for your *own children*, but for your *own houſe*, or,—as it is properly rendered in the marginal notes—for your *own kin*.'

How far kin may extend, I do not pretend to ſay.—In reputable life, every one, we ſee, is glad to carry it as far, as nature ever intended it to go. All that needs to be added is, that the ſame connexions of blood, or the ſame ties of affinity, which are acknowledged to ſubſiſt among men in the higher ranks of life, do really ſubſiſt among them, let the condition of their relatives be what it may. Nay, the more indigent your relatives are, the cloſer, for that very reaſon, ought your connexions with them to be. This is evidently agreeable to nature, how remote

ſoever

ſoever it may be from the faſhion of the world.

Much is it to be wiſhed, that men would follow the leadings of nature, for the relief of human wants.

The Parent of nature, we know, hath linked us all together by the common bands of humanity. 'He hath faſhioned us alike.' As men, he hath connected us with men; and, from this general relation of humanity, we are bound to relieve each other in diſtreſs. This general relation, however, while it

is ſo widely diffuſed, does not operate with ſufficient ſtrength. Beſides the general relation, therefore, which connects the whole community of men; there are other ſpecial relations, which ſubſiſt between particular ſocieties; and even between the members of ſeparate families.

Between families of the ſame ſtock,—as far as the ſtock of them can be traced,—peculiar relations do ſubſiſt; and from the joint conſent of all nations, members of the ſame family are, on the claim of kin, entitled to peculiar regards from every other member

member of it. Yes, branches of the ſame family from which we ourſelves have ſprung, are entitled to our peculiar regards, till they juſtly forfeit them by wrong behaviour. As long, too, as they act with probity in life, they contribute to the common fund of family honour, be their condition ever ſo low; and the more unfortunate they are, while they ſupport a good character, the ſtronger is our obligation to provide for them in diſtreſs. The formal proof of this is purpoſely waved, as needleſs.

To

To diſcard ſuch of our relatives, not for their faults, but their misfortunes; not for their wrong behaviour, but their poverty; is a violation, I need not ſay of the law of Chriſt, but of the law of nature: It is; and I appeal to every man for the truth of the aſſertion. . . . . Are we tempted to diſcard ſuch of our relations, becauſe we imagine, that to take notice of them would demean us in the opinion of men? What ſort of men, I aſk, muſt they be, who can think in this manner? Every man, whoſe opinion is worth the regarding, will think juſt the contrary; in-

ſomuch that, if we ſtudy to recommend ourſelves to the beſt judges, we cannot more effectually do it, than by providing for thoſe of our kindred whom adverſity hath reduced, and thrown upon us as dependants. To do this, however, is the ſure way of approving ourſelves to the benevolent Parent of mankind; for the doing of this, is the diſcharging of a duty, which he hath bound upon us by the unalterable law of our natures. This, every man's own heart—if he honeſtly conſult it,—will prove to him beyond a doubt.

Let

Let me in the next place obſerve; Providence hath made ſo wiſe a diſtribution of the bleſſings of life, that, if the heads of a family would but extend their regards to the ſeveral members of it, the whole might—in a general way at leaſt——be comfortably provided for: they might be much better provided for, however, than in fact they too often are. For, there are few families, in which there are not ſome placed in circumſtances, not only above want, but even in affluence; ſo that if their diſpoſitions were equal to their circumſtances, they might aſſiſt their

their needy relations, without at all injuring their own immediate offspring. Thus it might be, if men would but purſue the leadings of nature, and ſecond the intentions of Providence. But ſo far is it from being thus,—ſo far are the needy dependants of rich relations from being better provided for, on this account—that they are often, in fact, the worſe provided for. The account of this is obvious enough.--As they have relations, who are able to relieve them,——other perſons ſatisfy themſelves with preſuming, they are ſo relieved. We are all of

us

us apt to take up with very ſlight evidence, where we have an intereſt in yielding our aſſent. And, as we are intereſted in believing that the rich do provide for their poor kindred; becauſe, by this means, we are excuſed from contributing our quotas; ſo we readily believe, or we preſume however,—which does the buſineſs as well—that the poor are ſo provided for. Alas! go to the abodes of indigence, attend to the complaints of the poor, examine the caſe; and you will find, it is very often directly the reverſe.

I will

I will not ſay how cruel it is to ſuffer thoſe, whom God hath literally made of one blood with ourſelves, to periſh unnoticed, when we are very able to relieve them, without injury to ourſelves. The cruelty of this, I leave every perſon to reflect upon the very firſt moment he chuſes to make it the ſubject of his reflections. . . On the other hand, I refer every man to his own heart, who hath deviſed liberal things for his relatives in diſtreſs. Whoever hath done this, hath diſcharged one duty. He hath done nothing more, it is true, than natural affection required: this,

this, however, he hath done: and although there be not much merit in this, yet, thanks unto the Author of our being! he hath annexed conſiderable ſatisfactions to the diſcharge of thoſe duties, the omiſſion of which would be exceedingly culpable, and ought to cover us with ſhame!

From what has been ſaid, it ſhould appear, that parents, of every rank, ought to expreſs their regards for their chiidren, by making the beſt proviſion for them they are able, both in reſpect of the life 'which now is, and of that alſo which is to come.' Thoſe

Thoſe who are in the lower circumſtances of life, ſhould do the beſt they can, by their diligence, by their frugality and prudent management, to provide for *their* children.

Such as are in more eligible circumſtances ought to provide for their children in a decent and reputable manner, becoming the mediocrity of their ſtations.

Parents in affluent life may provide for their children, I was going to ſay, at their own diſcretion. As to the preſent world, there is no danger, however, that the children of ſuch parents will

be neglected. They are already amply provided for; as far as the contingent goods of fortune can be a proviſion. May they, likewiſe, be the heirs of a far nobler, and of a much more enduring inheritance!

The reſult of the whole is, that perſons are bound univerſally, in proportion to their abilities, to provide not only for their own immediate offspring, but for their kindred and dependants in diſtreſs; leſt they periſh for want, and through a criminal negligence in thoſe, who ought to furniſh them ſupplies.

I will

I will not tax myſelf to prove, that this is the requirement of Chriſtianity. So plain a caſe will not be diſputed; and, therefore, needs not to be inſiſted on. I will only add; if we diſcharge the duties which have been recommended, we ſhall ſo far act as becometh our reaſonable nature. But, if we neglect theſe duties, we ſhall be ſo far from deſerving the title of Chriſtians, that it muſt be by an act of courteſy, we ſhall be called ſo much as honeſt men.

FINIS.

MVSEVM BRITAN NICVM